operators, seeking large profits to connect the low return in rural areas;

(c) the number of persons still awaiting for telephone connections from urban areas and small rural settlements; and

(d) the steps taken by Government for rapid extension of telephone density to rural areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICAITONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Minimum obligation to be met by private opertators for village public telephones (VPTs) is 10% of direct exchange line s to be provided by them in every quarter of a year till coverage of all villages in the licensed service area. A weightage of 15% (Max.) was earmarked to provide impetus for coverage of rural areas in the tender documents for award of licences.

(c) Abour 29.5 lakhs as on 31.5.98.

(d) Government proposes to install a large number of small capacity digital electronic exchanges and wireless systems in rural areas?

Appointment of Junior Accounts Officers in Department of Posts

4467. SHRI S. PETER ALPHONSE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Governmentare aware of the fact that Postal employees who have qualified for Junior Accounts officers' Post from the year 1990 onwards are not given promotion for want of vacancies in the Postal Department;

(b) whether it is also a fact that a number of Junior Accounts Officers' Posts are vacant in the Department of Telecommunications for want of qualified hands; and

(c) if so, whether Government will come forward to appoint persons who qualified for Postal Department in the Telecommunication Department?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICAITONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The Department of Telecom. may take qualified JAOs from other Departments/Organisations including Department of Posts on deputation basis if sufficient number of candidates in the Department of Telecom. do not qualify the JAO (Telecom.) Examinaton.

Financial Burden on Account of DOT's Conversion into An Operating Company

4468. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have calculated the immediate financial burden which will have to be incurred by Govenrment if the DoT is converted into an operating company; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICAITONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) and (b) Preliminary exercises with regard to possible restructuring options for separation of the service providing arm of the Department of Telecom from the Ministry, including financial implications have been made. No final decision has, however, been taken in the matter.

Conversion of Manual Telephone Exchanges into Electronic Exchanges

4469. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to convert mannual telephone exchanges into electronic exchanges in Karnataka;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the estimated expenditure likely to be incurred thereon?